



EASIEST WAY FOR SUCCESS AT LOYOLA: STAYING ACTIVE By Colin Davis

The workload in college can be overwhelming. The mental stress of piling homework, trying to stay on top of work, balancing quizzes, and handling life outside of school with roommates and family gets hard to balance together and let go of stress. Still, one of the best stress relievers is working out and taking a break from all the outside factors that bother you, such as homework or studying. Students often struggle to get a gym membership without paying over \$30 a month just to use the gym twice a week, but here at Loyola Maryland, the Fitness and Aquatic Center is free and accessible for all.

What is the FAC and How Can it Help?

The heart of campus wellness belongs in the FAC, where you can stay active and unwind in multiple weight rooms, an aquatic center, cardio zones, and basketball courts all under one roof, to fit your goals. All facilities welcome everyone, whether you are a varsity athlete, student, beginner, or just looking for a place to do homework between classes. An athlete who utilizes the FAC every day shares, "the FAC was designed to be welcoming to all and accessible to all students" (Leary '27).

College can be stressful, especially when you are balancing studies with friends and family, while all at the same time trying to keep a good social balance. Some feel overwhelmed by all the pressures of school, but this student has found, "when you exercise, you increase your levels of dopamine and norepinephrine, which positively impact your attention and motivation" ([McKinnis](#)). Simple exercise for half an hour a day can boost attention span in class as well as motivation in and outside of the classroom, making the FAC the best place to access the better part of yourself. The complex is a place where you realize that everyone starts somewhere, but it all starts with taking the first step.

The Weight Room

At the FAC, you might feel hesitant to enter the weight room. For me, the FAC felt intimidating because I thought I was the only one who did not know how to lift. But, once in the weight room, you are welcomed by a bright, lit room full of other students who started in the same place as you. You see beginners learning to use barbells, athletes working to get stronger, and others just trying to stay in shape, working out with their friends. A freshman student here at Loyola explains how, for him, "the FAC has become a go-to space to build muscle, become stronger, and to develop confidence" (Feldman '29). In the weight room, you can find free weights, a variety of machines, squat racks, benches, and cables to support any individual's needs. Whether you are starting from scratch or pushing to get a new personal best, the weight room is a place where you can learn, meet friends, and improve your mental and physical health.

Aquatic Center

The aquatic center is completely different from the weight room of the FAC because the pool is much quieter and calmer. As a swimmer representing Loyola, I spend most of my time in the pool. No matter if I had a bad

day or a good day, I could always say that the pool gave me a way to take a break from all the noise of adjusting to being a college student. The water has a way of slowing down time and relaxing you. Whether you are a competitive swimmer or not, all are welcome to utilize the pool.

Swimming also has many benefits for physical and especially mental health. Research states that just "swimming laps for 30 minutes can help you burn more calories than walking or weightlifting for the same amount of time" ([Gordan](#)). Swimming only once or twice a week also boosts cardiac health and overall mental well-being. For you, the aquatic center becomes more than just a pool, but a place that eventually becomes more personal and a quiet time to reset while improving physical and mental health.

The Courts

The courts at the FAC welcome you because they make whole building feel alive. All students, friends or not, come to play basketball between or after classes and laugh with people they didn't even know an hour prior. These courts are different from your everyday courts; they can help people from different backgrounds and interests connect. The quick bursts of laughter and competition running up and down the court eventually dissolve stress without you even noticing. As a first-year student, you can start to make connections on the courts. You don't need to have a background in basketball; all you need to do is show up and call out if someone needs one more to play. Then, suddenly, you're on a team. You can learn names between plays and end up seeing friendly faces each time you come back.

The feeling of being mentally reset by just a bit of activity is what the men's swim team school record holder in the 100 breaststroke says, "I feel like I can take a break from all of the stress college brings and just play a game or two with people I don't even know" (Coyle '28). It doesn't matter if you are in athletics, honors programs, clubs, or a student who is focused on academics, everyone needs a balance of work and social life, which the courts at the FAC can bring to anyone's life.



Developing Strength

The FAC is not just a place where you can better yourself physically, but also a place to develop strength mentally. College is not easy; you constantly have work you can always do and tests that are always creeping around the corner. In the classroom, "college students often grapple with high-stress levels," but studies have shown that "physical activity can be a natural antidote" ([Collegenp](#)). Doing just a bit of physical activity a week can increase "the production of endorphins, also known as the body's feel-good neurotransmitters, which helps in mood elevation" ([Collegenp](#)). Not only can physical activity help with students' motivation, but it can boost your attitude and mood, which might be the small thing in your day that helps you shoot for more success in your college career.